

Gratuities Policy

Rationale:

Over the years the climate in which public bodies operate has continued to evolve. There is much greater scrutiny of some practices that might previously have been taken for granted. The self-evaluating school should review and reflect on its current practice across all areas of school life. An evaluation of that type may identify traditions and customs that have previously been accepted as normal practice but perhaps now require a review. The practice of school staff accepting gratuities is one such area.

Increasingly, questions have been raised about public sector employees accepting gifts/gratuities and whether or not, acceptance of these gifts/gratuities could be viewed as compromising the probity of an organisation's operations.

As a result, some public bodies have adopted regulations around the area of corporate governance including some educational bodies. 'Best Practice' guidance would indicate that public bodies should have a Gratuities policy. Furthermore, the guidance would indicate that if within the provisions of the policy there is consent for the employees to accept gifts, then these should be of a very limited monetary value. Any gift received by an employee of a public body should be entered into a 'Register of Gifts/Gratuities' which should include the details of who gave it, to whom it was given and why it was given.

In light of this guidance, it is important to determine whether it is appropriate for one party in a professional relationship to accept gifts/gratuities from one/some/all of the other parties in that relationship.

This policy statement seeks to clarify this issue for school staff, Governors and parents.

Partnership with Parents

The Principal and staff of St Joseph's PS and Nursery value the relationship that the school has with parents. The partnership that exists between home and school is of paramount importance in securing high educational attainments for the children. The school values the views of parents and, both the supportive feedback and the constructive criticism received help the school to evaluate its practices.

Intrinsic to that relationship is the support and encouragement received from parents. The school benefits immeasurably from those parents who demonstrate their appreciation and gratitude through their willingness to volunteer to assist at PFA events, to accompany classes on trips, to help out at music and dance events, by providing transport to and from sporting fixtures and volunteering to share their particular expertise with the children during class visits etc.

However, the school respectfully requests that parents' desire to express their support, gratitude and appreciation for its work should not extend to the presentation of gifts/gratuities to school staff/volunteers. A refusal to accept could potentially be embarrassing to both parties.

Policy Statement

Having given due consideration to the key points set out in the ***Rationale*** it has been determined that staff, tutors and volunteers working in St Joseph's Primary School and Nursery will not accept gifts/gratuities from children/ parents or other family members/ representatives of commercial companies/ any other outside agency supporting the work of the school/any other outside body

Expressing Gratitude

In previous discussions on this matter, some contributors have mentioned the importance of teaching children to say thank you as a possible reason for retaining the provision of gifts/gratuities.

The school agrees that encouraging children to demonstrate their gratitude to all who help them is an important part of their development. However, there are many other ways for a child to express his or her gratitude to staff/volunteers other than the presentation of gifts/gratuities. These could include, for example, making a card, writing a 'Thank You' letter, drawing a picture or a verbal expression of appreciation.

Mechanism for Making a Donation to School Funds

On occasions, the school receives an expression of interest from individuals wishing to make a monetary donation to School Funds. This type of donation is completely different from the presentation of gifts/gratuities to individual members of school staff.

The school is supported in its fund raising efforts by the St Joseph's Parents' and Friends' Association. This is a body made up of parent volunteers which organises a number of fund raising events during the course of the school year. All monies raised by the PFA are used to purchase equipment/ resources to enhance the children's educational experiences.

Donations to School Funds should be given directly to the Treasurer, St Joseph's PFA.

Arrangements for Review

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's ongoing arrangements for evaluating its policies and procedures.